

# The long arm of the state? Transnationalism, Islam, and nation-building: the case of Turkey and Morocco

Thijl Sunier<sup>1</sup> · Heleen van der Linden<sup>1</sup> ·  
Ellen van de Bovenkamp<sup>1</sup>

Published online: 24 March 2016

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**Abstract** From the moment the first Turkish and Moroccan workers migrated to Europe in the early 1960s, the Turkish and Moroccan states have been concerned with how to bind emigrated citizens to their country of origin. In this article, we focus on Islam as a multi-dimensional binding mechanism. Religion is a broad register that links emotion, affect, and senses of belonging and binds individuals to political and cultural projects of collective actors and states. As we will demonstrate, it is a field in which both states and migrants have developed a variety of activities and initiatives, but it is difficult to single out what pertains to the state and what not. We argue that although state involvement in these two cases differs markedly, there are some intriguing parallels when we concentrate on religion. In both cases, religious affiliation is a very complex source of binding and of fission. State-monitored transnational networks have been tools of binding, but the same networks have engendered processes of disengagement from the state.

**Keywords** Islam · Migration · Morocco · Transnationalism · Turkey

## Introduction

Towards the end of the 1970s, a poster circulated in the Netherlands. On the poster, we could see a blindfolded man, apparently a prisoner. His head is grabbed by a hand with razor-sharp nails. On the sleeve of the hand it says: “Amicales, secret police of Morocco.” The poster was distributed by a committee that wanted to raise awareness among the Dutch public and the government about alleged control and suppression of

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✉ Thijl Sunier  
j.t.sunier@vu.nl

<sup>1</sup> Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Social Science, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam VA, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Moroccan guest workers in Europe by the Moroccan regime of King Hassan II, the authoritarian king of Morocco in those years. The organization “Amicales” was set up as an association for Moroccans abroad, but they were accused of spying for the regime. The association soon became known as “the long arm of King Hassan.” However, in those days, the public attention for these activities was low. Governments in Europe tended to consider this an internal Moroccan affair in which they should not interfere.

A few years later, the Dutch government welcomed the foundation of a branch of a Turkish state institution, the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) in 1983. The same year, an agreement was signed between the Dutch and Turkish governments to send imams in order to meet the religious needs of the rapidly growing Turkish Muslim community in the Netherlands. The same kinds of agreement were established with other European countries. There was a general political consent that these imams would preach a “modest Islam” and that they would counter radical tendencies among Turkish Muslims in Europe. It was the time of the serious international clash between the new Islamic government in Iran and the West. There was a general fear of emerging “fundamentalism,” as it was called in those years. European governments with a sizable Muslim population welcomed the cross-border control of sending states.

Three decades later, the attitude in Europe towards transnational activities and state involvement has changed dramatically. Two fairly recent incidents may elucidate this. The first concerns the position of the Dutch MP of the Labor Party, Khadija Arib, of Moroccan descent. In 2006, she took a seat in the *Conseil Consultatif des Droits de l’Homme*, a consultative body for the Moroccan government in human rights issues. This aroused fierce reactions among Dutch nationalists and right-wing politicians in the Dutch Parliament, especially the Freedom Party of Geert Wilders, but there were also politicians of other parties who considered her alignment with the *Conseil* not appropriate for a Dutch MP. She was accused of having close links with the Moroccan government. According to these critics, she should make an exclusive choice either for the Netherlands or for Morocco. The incident was part of a more general discussion about double passports and the impossibility for migrants of Moroccan descent to give up their Moroccan passports. Even though Arib was cleared from allegations, a number of right-wing politicians persisted in their opinion that MPs of Moroccan and Turkish background do have a loyalty problem. For that reason, the candidacy of Arib for chairing the Dutch Parliament was contested: an MP with a loyalty problem cannot lead the Dutch Parliament.

The second example concerns the continuous relation between the Turkish Diyanet and Turkish mosques in the Netherlands. When the report Diyanet was published (Sunier et al. 2011; see also Sunier and Landman 2014) about the changing relations between the Directorate and Turkish Muslims in the Netherlands, there were critical questions in Parliament by Dutch MP’s about the alleged control by the Turkish state of Muslims in the Netherlands through the Dutch branch of Diyanet. The 30-year-old arrangement between Turkey and the Netherlands about sending imams was now presented as something undesired, unprecedented, and utterly problematic.<sup>1</sup> A similar

<sup>1</sup> See Vermeulen, B (2010) Ankara is baas van Turken in EU’ *NRC Handelsblad* <http://academic.lexisnexis.nl/> (accessed 26 November 2013); Hegener, M. (2013) ‘Erdogan bepaalt niet of Yunus een moslim is’ *De Volkskrant* <http://academic.lexisnexis.nl/> (accessed 26 November 2013)

concern was expressed around the involvement in mid-2013 of the then Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in the case of the foster child Yunus, born to Turkish parents, but placed in a foster home in the Netherlands. It aroused fierce reactions, not so much because of the Turkish protests about the homosexual identity of the foster parents, but because Turkey interfered in the case. There is a broad public consensus that a leader of another country should not deal with what was considered a Dutch domestic affair.

These are just a few of the many examples of the serious concern about foreign states mingling in issues abroad. As these cases clearly demonstrate, the involvement of states with the lives of their subjects outside the country is a very sensitive issue that regularly stirs discussions about territories, jurisdictions, and foreign influence. Whether we deal with formal regulations for nationality and citizenship, or with networks, activities, and political affiliations beyond the confines of state borders, the “long arm” of governments is invoked in debates on citizenship and loyalty and is generally considered as unacceptable. It would violate national integrity—so the argument in these debates goes. Cross-border activities of individual migrants are often considered problematic, temporal survivals from times prior to migration. This is, for example, the case with the continuous discussion about marriage partners from the country of origin (Storms and Bartels 2008). According to the dominant integration paradigm, ties with the country of origin are considered counterproductive practices that hamper integration into host societies and should be discouraged as much as possible. In the latest policy report on integration of 2011, the Dutch government explicitly emphasized that building a national community and diminishing immigration go hand in hand (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken 2011). The orientation of an increasing number of inhabitants with a Turkish or Moroccan background towards their countries of origin is considered a problem for societal cohesion (SCP 2012, p. 90). Transnational networks and contacts abroad continue to pose a challenge for integration, but they are manageable.

The role of states in transnational activities is, however, considered to be of a different nature and is generally met with suspicion and even outrage.<sup>2</sup> The involvement of foreign states in the lives of their overseas subjects is a source of contention. It lays bare the inherent tensions that exist in all migratory cycles across the globe between sending states and migrants that seek to sustain transnational linkages as long as possible and receiving states that embark on a domestication and integration program to turn migrants into citizens (see Sunier 2014).

## Transnationalism and nation-building

In this article, we address the involvement of the Turkish and Moroccan states in the lives of migrants and their offspring. Since the moment the first Turkish and Moroccan workers migrated to Europe in the early 1960s, the Turkish and Moroccan states have been concerned with how to bind emigrated citizens to their country. At the same time,

<sup>2</sup> In a Dutch newspaper article, Santing and Sprangers argue that the monitoring activities of the Turkish state among Turks in Europe negatively affect the integration of Turks into Dutch society. They urge the Dutch government to “keep the Turkish state at distance” (NRC 02-03-2013).

receiving states in Europe in the course of years have put more effort into developing policies towards gradual absorption into societies of residence and to disengage migrants from the country of origin. This has also been the case with the Netherlands. Turks and Moroccans constitute the largest groups of migrants in the country. They also constitute the largest groups of migrants with an Islamic background (CBS 2013).<sup>3</sup> They are a prime focus of policy reports and public debates (SCP 2012).

Comparison between these two cases is instructive in a number of ways. Moroccans and Turks have a relatively long migration history in the Netherlands. The present population is very diverse with respect to background, social position, migratory background, and cultural outlook. Migrants have built up an extended and very diverse organizational landscape in the country. Both Turkey and Morocco have a long history of transnational relationships with the migrant populations in the Netherlands (Landman 1992; Sunier 1996; Rath et al. 2001; Maussen 2006; Sunier et al. 2011; Bouras 2012). There are also important differences in the modes of involvement of the two states, as we will demonstrate in this article.

We focus on Islam as an important multi-dimensional binding mechanism. Together with nationalism, religion is the most effective way to attach migrants to their countries of origin. Religion is a broad register that links emotion, affect, and senses of belonging, and binds individuals to political and cultural projects of collective actors and states (Levitt 1998; Vásquez and Marquardt 2003; Werbner 2002). As we will demonstrate, it is a field in which both states and migrants have developed a variety of activities and initiatives, but it is difficult to single out what pertains to the state and what not.<sup>4</sup>

We will compare the Turkish and Moroccan cases by elaborating two arguments. Firstly, we critically take issue with the dominant integration paradigm characteristic of much of the migration literature and policy reports that transnational networks, practices, and orientations of former migrants hamper integration into host society. Wimmer and Glick Schiller argue that studies on migration processes have been narrowed down to the question of how nation-states integrate migrants. They show how the historically grown focus in social science on the nation-state over the past two centuries has defined the very concept of migration. Consequently, transnationalism as an aspect of migratory cycles is still caught in a national paradigm (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002, p. 324).<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the study of Islam in Europe has implicitly become synonymous with studying how individual states, with their respective modes of incorporation and integration, nationalize Islam and integrate Muslims.<sup>6</sup> We question this limited scope and we take up the concept of “simultaneity” as our point of departure (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). Migrants can participate fully in the host society while being oriented towards the country of origin. We cannot fully understand what goes on in the lives of individuals when we take national boundaries as the only point of reference. “Migrants are often embedded in multi-layered, multi-sited transnational social fields”

<sup>3</sup> For the 2013 statistics, please see; <http://statline.cbs.nl> (accessed on 27 November 2013)

<sup>4</sup> The findings on Turkey are based on a research project carried out in the past years on state activities in the Netherlands (see Sunier et al. 2011). The Moroccan case is based on recent research in Morocco and the Netherlands by Nadia Bouras, Merel Kahmann, and Ellen van de Bovenkamp.

<sup>5</sup> To take the nation-state as the self-evident site of analysis has been referred to as methodological nationalism (see also Beck 2000; Chernilo 2006).

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion, see Sunier (2013).

(ibid, p. 1003). There is an extensive body of literature addressing the dialectical relationship between the fixing and flow inherent in migration cycles (see e.g., Basch et al. 1994; Smith and Guarnizo 1998; Vertovec 2009; Salazar 2010). This literature convincingly demonstrates that there is no contradiction between transnational activities and practices on the one hand and processes of local rooting on the other.

Our second argument and main focus of this article concerns the role of states in transnational activities. We argue that there is no sharp distinction to be drawn between private and state transnational practices. It is often impossible to determine what state activity is and what is initiated by ordinary people. The increasingly diversified transnational field includes a wide variety of forms, practices, goals, strategies, and motivations (Vertovec 2009). The analytical distinction between state activities and those of the population obfuscates the dynamics at work in this field (Hansen and Stepputat 2001, p. 25). Van Klinken and Barker argue that, “states may portray themselves as generic and immensely powerful in their own right, but in reality they are intimately embedded in their societies in historically contingent ways” (2009, p. 2). We argue that this also holds true for transnational activities and networks. Any proper analysis of transnational networks must include this entire field. A distinction between the state as the domain of laws, rules, and institutionalized power as contrasted by private initiatives as the domain of contingent, volatile, and personal exchange overlooks the entanglement and the societal embeddedness of both state and private transnational activity.

The state is a significant cultural agent. In the last decades, as a consequence of processes of globalization and international migration, nation-states have redressed their role as active cultural and social agents in continuously evolving discursive fields (see Geschiere and Meyer 1998). As Rose and Miller have argued, “It is in this discursive field that ‘the state’ itself emerges as a historically variable linguistic device for conceptualizing and articulating ways of ruling” (Rose and Miller 1992, p. 177). Most nation-states in Europe have reemphasized their role as a powerful force in cultural processes and a meaningful source of legitimacy in a time when this very legitimacy of nation-states as providers of political meaning is under pressure (Geschiere 2009; Verkaaik 2010). As such, nation-states are cultural projects that present themselves through particular narratives in particular sites. This could be observed first and foremost in the debate about the unification of Europe and the integration of migrants. Nation-states, through different political agents articulate specific national narratives, concepts of citizenship, and models of integration. But instead of articulating simplistic messages of patriotism or nationalism, their civic and political messages have become far more subtle and sophisticated, concerned with seemingly universal values of democratic participation, supra-national inclusiveness, and the peaceful resolution of all conflicts (Baumann 2004; Shils 1994). Nation-states today develop a variety of ways to translate nationalist exclusivism into inclusivist narratives of participation; integration and identification (Schiffauer 2008; see also Anderson 1991, p. 6). We consider religion a crucial constituent component in this respect.

We further contend that transnational activities are inextricably linked with nation-building. Modern technological means in combination with the gradual deregulation and privatization of tasks that traditionally resorted under direct control of the state have resulted in an externalization of statecraft. Spijkerboer (2011) has shown how the modern state has outsourced and exported border control. In other

words, where traditionally the control of national states ended where state borders were located, today's technologies of control can be found anywhere. We argue that the externalization of statecraft is not just a matter of legislation and policing borders, but also of cultural projects (see e.g., Geschiere 2009; Duyvendak and Scholten 2011). An instructive example of the externalization of the national cultural project is the implementation by the Dutch government of the legal condition that potential immigrants should already pass integration exams before entering the country.<sup>7</sup>

We can observe an intriguing paradox in the ways modern states operate transnationally in their role as agents of a national cultural project. Modern technology and means of communication have enabled states to outsource, externalize, and digitalize activities designed to strengthen the domestic cultural project of the nation-state. Transnational activities are an inherent device of that process, but these activities must be in tune with the developments among the migrant population abroad. States cannot ignore the complex dynamics in which their former subjects live. In the following sections, we will dwell on these transnational activities by analyzing how the Turkish and Moroccan states operate in the field of Islam.

## Turkey

One of the most important devices of nation-building of the Turkish state is the institution of Diyanet: the Directorate of Religious Affairs. The official task given to Diyanet when it was established in 1924—about 6 months after the foundation of the Turkish Republic—was threefold: (a) to administer the affairs of the Islamic faith and the concomitant practices and arrangements, (b) to illuminate society about religion, and (c) to administer places of worship. This threefold task has since then been stated in several official documents, such as Law 633 of 2 July 1965. This legal text describing the tasks has remained unchanged until today.<sup>8</sup> Diyanet is mentioned briefly in the constitutions of 1924, 1961, and 1982. The 1961 Constitution had organized Diyanet as a constitutional institution and all its staff members became civil servants. The 1982 Constitution mentions Diyanet in article 136; this article states that Diyanet is part of the general administration (*genel idare*, referring to institutions that are directly linked to the government) and that it functions in accordance with the principle of secularism, staying out of all political ideas and opinions, and identifies national solidarity and unity as its primary aim (Sunier et al. 2011, p. 32). These tasks reflected the close ties between religion and nationalism that were now propagated. Diyanet had to “protect the Turkish national identity” (Zürcher and Van der Linden 2004, p. 110; Poulton 1997, p. 185–187).

The link between Islam and Turkish identity is certainly not self-evident. The association between Islam and Turkish history and ethnicity has always been contested. There is a considerable proportion of Turks who refute this link and argue that Islam is alien to Turkish identity. The connection between Islam and Turkish identity is a specific cultural project dating back long before the establishment of the Turkish republic in 1923. The entanglement of Turkish nationalism and Sunni Islam had

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/inburgering-en-integratie> (accessed on 27 November 2013)

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance: <http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/english/tanitim.asp?id=4>; Law 633: <http://www.ekanun.net/633-sayili-kanun/index.html> (accessed on 7 July 2013)



already been propagated in the course of the nineteenth century. For instance, Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924), a leading thinker of Turkish nationalism argued that “the nation would be vitalized only if ‘true’ Islam could replace superstitious beliefs which [...] were caused by external factors, such as the influence of Arab culture or corrupt clergy” (Azak 2010, p. 6–7). From the establishment of Diyanet onwards, attempts to “Turkify” or “purify” Islam (or Islamizing Turkishness) also started to appear in publications of Diyanet.<sup>9</sup> These publications illustrate that the elements of a synthesis between Turkish nationalism and Islam were discussed and distributed long before the 1970s. However, a coherent political ideology, widespread popular and political support, and a “historical” legitimation were lacking until then.

But, in the 1970s and 1980s, a political movement embracing Islam and Turkish nationalism acquired political influence, especially after the coup of 1980. General Kenan Evren, the leader of the junta, did not only ban most non-nationalistic religiously oriented parties, but also unleashed an ideological offensive, in which Islam played a central role. The Islam that was officially approved and propagated by the military leadership combined Turkish nationalism with Islam. The ideology was called the *Türk-Islam Sentezi* (Turkish-Islam Synthesis). Kafesoğlu has developed and elaborated this ideology in the 1970s. It postulated that Islam had a special appeal to Turks, since the origins of Islam of the prophet Mohammed had a lot in common with the culture of the Central Asian Turkish peoples. They shared a high regard for justice, monotheism, a belief in the immortal soul, and a strong devotion to family and decency. Therefore, it was the Turkish people’s mission to be exceptional “soldiers of Islam.” For the supporters of this ideology, Islam and Turkish nationalism were inextricably linked to modern Turkish culture (Zürcher and Van der Linden 2004, p. 108–109).<sup>10</sup> The activities of Diyanet must be understood against this background. Historically, the position of Diyanet has always been complex. On the one hand, it has been founded as an institution of control on religious activities, but on the other hand, it is meant to represent the population of Turkey. When Diyanet extended its activities abroad in the early 1980s, its position became even more complex.

## Diyanet in the Netherlands

There were mainly two reasons for Diyanet to extend its activities to European countries with a large Turkish immigrant population, such as the Netherlands. In general, Diyanet reacted to the need for religious services and accommodation in the Netherlands. Towards the end of the 1970s, the number of Turkish Muslims increased considerably<sup>11</sup> and, accordingly, their need for accommodation grew. The second motivation could be described as a “competitive” move, though some would say “protective” act, against non-official Turkish Islamic movements and ideologies—similar to their motivations in Turkey (Sunier et al. 2011, p. 55). In Turkey, only mosques under supervision of Diyanet were allowed; facilities run by non-official Sunni movements like Milli Görüş, the Gülen movement, and the Süleymancı were illegal.

<sup>9</sup> For instance, the works of Ahmet Hamdi Akseki, like his *Askere din kitabı* (religion book for soldiers), published in 1925.

<sup>10</sup> Text based on Kafesoğlu (1985).

<sup>11</sup> In 1970, there were around 30,000 people, while in 1980, their number had increased to 125,000. For an overview, see <http://statline.cbs.nl/> (accessed on 27 November 2013).

Since the end of the 1970s, Diyanet founded its own umbrella organizations in the Netherlands: the Turkish Islamic Cultural Foundation (TICF), founded in 1979, and the Dutch Islamic Foundation (ISN), founded in 1982. Compared to other Turkish Islamic movements, the position of Diyanet in the Netherlands is unique because of its relation with the Turkish state and because of the division of tasks and responsibilities between the two organizations in the Netherlands: the TICF and the ISN. Since 1979, the TICF operated as the representative of the Turkish Muslim population and as a kind of grass-roots organization. When the ISN was founded in 1982, however, this was an effort to organize the same population in a more centralized way, formally controlled by Diyanet officials in Ankara, and chaired by the religious counselor, the *müşavir* of the Turkish Embassy in The Hague, the formal representative of Diyanet (Sunier et al. 2011, p. 55–56).

The two umbrella organizations agreed on a general division of labor: the ISN was responsible for theological issues and formal religious duties and services whereas the TICF organized social and cultural activities and represented its members in local issues. Until recently, this division of labor and responsibilities functioned relatively well. In recent years, however, the ISN seems to be shifting—or rather extending—its activities towards the *cemaat*, the community of believers, thus gradually bringing the TICF under the ISN's control (Sunier et al. 2011: 56).

The ISN holds office in The Hague. According to the statutory chart, its aim is to “create and maintain opportunities and facilities for Muslims in the Netherlands to enable them to fulfill their religious duties, to improve the position of the Turkish Muslim community in the Netherlands, and provide facilities for the spiritual development of Muslims.” These aims have not changed since 1982, the year of its foundation, and can easily be found in sources like the ISN website or in its periodicals.<sup>12</sup> Under the heading of *faaliyetler* (activities to meet those goals), the ISN lists 27 activities<sup>13</sup>, which are basically similar to those in a document dating from 1988. Among other things, it is clearly stated that the ISN should not interfere in political affairs of any sort. In short: on paper, the position, responsibilities, and activities of ISN have not changed, but in practice, they did.

### Nation-building and the everyday reality of transnational networks

Turkish Muslim organizations in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe can only partially be compared to those in Turkey. In order to understand organizational and other developments with respect to Islam, it is important to consider the fundamental changes that took place after migration. This is especially the case with respect to the activities initiated by these organizations. Initially, activities were mainly oriented towards the preservation of links with Turkey; however, with the transformation of the Turkish Muslim population from migrants to post-migrants, many organizations gradually shifted their policies. According to Azak, “the shift from a mosque-oriented Islam towards an Islam that spreads itself in the broader public sphere” is an important development in the Netherlands (2009, p. 79). However, it is important to note that Azak explicitly refers to non-ISN organizations in the Netherlands, implying that such a shift does not apply to (or only minimally concerns) the ISN: “Members of Turkish

<sup>12</sup> For instance: <http://www.diyamet.nl/vakfin-kurulus-amaclari/> (accessed on 7 July 2013)

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem.



Muslim organizations like Milli Görüş, the Gülen movement and the Süleymanîcîs participate in the democratic civil society, and are even competing with each other in obtaining their share of governmental funds aimed at stimulating integration. This competition leads to civil activism, beyond the level of mosque organizations, and, accordingly, to an increased participation of Turkish migrants in public life” (2009, p. 79). However, we argue that the same shift is now taking place in the Diyanet organizations as well.

All Turkish Muslim organizations in the Netherlands first and foremost provide religious services and accommodation. In that respect, there has always been a fierce competition for rank-and-file members between several movements operating among Turkish Muslims. The organizations that resort under Diyanet have also primarily been founded for that purpose, but the relation with the Muslim population was always rather formal and distanced. Recently, we have observed a shift within Diyanet towards a stronger link with the Turkish Muslim population. We have called this *vermaatschappelijking* (a stronger emphasis on the social functions and role of Islam) (Sunier et al. 2011, p. 76). In order to determine whether the aforementioned “shift from a mosque-oriented Islam towards an Islam spreading itself in the broader public sphere” applies to the ISN as well, it is important to pay attention to the activities of ISN. If we look at the statutory chart, it is possible to make a (albeit artificial) division between “religious” and “social” activities. Some activities seem to be aimed more at facilitating religion than at “spreading Islam to a broader public sphere.” Examples of those religious services include providing religious information to Muslims in the Netherlands; posting religious staff abroad; developing activities related to the Hajj (pilgrimage); facilitating assistance in connection with circumcision and weddings; offering assistance with the transport of mortal remains of deceased (Turkish) Muslims to Turkey; educating religious staff; Quran and language courses; accepting and collecting donations, in money and in kind, and dividing and spending donations, such as *fitre* (alms at the end of the fasting month Ramadan) and *zakat* (a 40th part of the income as “alms”); and obtaining property “at the service of the objectives of the foundation.”<sup>14</sup>

Lately, the ISN seems to be more oriented towards “the broader public sphere” and the (intra- and inter-religious) “dialogue.” Examples of this social dimension include providing social and cultural services and assistance to (Turkish) Muslims living in the Netherlands; organizing radio and television broadcastings to inform people about Islam; working together with churches and other religious organizations in the Netherlands; stimulating and coordinating the teaching of Islam and scholarly research; founding and administrating schools that provide Islamic education; translating, printing, and publishing books about Quran sciences and other Islamic sciences and arts; opening and maintaining libraries; organizing conferences, seminars, and contests on Islamic topics; and the organizing of, and participation in, social, cultural, scholarly, and sports events.<sup>15</sup>

Since all these activities have changed little on paper since the 1980s and because we have observed visible changes in the actual practices of the ISN, it is important to analyze the specific interpretations and implementation process of these activities in concrete situations (Sunier et al. 2011, p. 78). Therefore, we will provide two small case studies on a local level.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.diyamet.nl/vakfin-kurulus-amaclari/> (accessed on 7 July 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem.

## Two cases: Kocatepe mosque and Mevlana mosque in Rotterdam

In order to better understand the “Umwelt” of local mosques, two examples in Rotterdam are instructive, a city with more than 40 mosques, of which 6 are ISN mosques.<sup>16</sup> The Kocatepe mosque is located in the Afrikaanderwijk, a so-called “multicultural” quarter in Rotterdam-Zuid (South). The mosque is situated in an old monumental building, which was built in the 1920s and formerly used as a school. The Mevlana mosque is located in Rotterdam-West, in a quarter that, like Rotterdam-Zuid, also has a high proportion of Muslim inhabitants. The Mevlana mosque was built in 2001 and is one of the few “newly built” mosques in the city (Sunier et al. 2011, p. 128).

The organizations running the Kocatepe and Mevlana mosques are daughter organizations of the ISN. The imams are Turkish citizens and are working as expatriates, employed by the Turkish government. The day-to-day management, however, lies in the hands of a local board consisting of volunteers, who, during interviews, emphasized the importance of local decision-making processes and the relative autonomy from activities run by the ISN in The Hague. They considered this important, as they were involved in several kinds of neighborhood activities which required a thorough familiarity with local political dynamics. Both the Kocatepe and the Mevlana mosques are more than mere houses for prayer. In addition to the prayer rooms, they have board rooms, a conference room, rooms for the elderly, youth, women and girls, Internet facilities, class rooms, a small library and study facility, a kitchen, a canteen, and even a hairdresser. Kocatepe opened a youth club a few years ago: a non-alcohol hang out place for Saturday nights, and watching—Dutch or Turkish—football matches; events supervised by a volunteer appointed by the mosque, who is familiar with the neighborhood (Sunier et al. 2011, p. 129).

The Kocatepe and Mevlana mosques are both open 7 days a week, during prayer times, but also for courses and social activities. The general activities organized are as follows: praying five times a day, Friday sermons, Quran classes, festivities on religious holidays, meetings organized around various topics like health or social problems, visiting the sick, and co-organizing (with the ISN) the yearly pilgrimage. The women’s department has several separate activities, such as language courses, Quran classes, and also sewing classes and “women only” swimming lessons. On a regular basis, guests are invited and social gatherings organized. Special activities are also organized for youth. According to a board member of Kocatepe, “the aim is to keep youngsters away from the street and to prevent derailment.” The youth have their own rooms and board; among other activities, they undertake visiting the cinema, playing movies, organizing theater plays, watching football matches, bowling, karting, camping, and table tennis. And last but not least, Kocatepe has its own football club, R.V.V. Kocatepe, which has 22 teams.<sup>17</sup> They regularly join the national football competition. Both visitors of the mosques and private sponsors finance most of the above-mentioned activities. These activities are therefore largely locally based (Sunier et al. 2011, p. 129–130).

The huge variety of locally based activities outside the strictly religious sphere creates bridges to the neighborhood and social environments of the Kocatepe and Mevlana mosques. One of the most concrete and visible elements of this are the various media (brochures) displayed at the entrance of the mosques. For instance: information

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.diyabet.nl/hdv-cami-hizmetleri/sube-cami-adresleri/> (accessed on 7 July 2013).

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.rvvkocatepe.nl/> (accessed on 7 July 2013).

about language courses, promotional brochures about insurances and mortgage, invitations for cultural events, information about health care and social problems, and even pamphlets promoting a car repair garage. All these activities and announcements indicate that the role of the mosque in the local community exceeds that of religious issues (Sunier et al. 2011: 133).

## Morocco

Although state involvement in the Moroccan case differs markedly from the Turkish case, there are some intriguing parallels when we concentrate on religion. As in the case of Turkish migrants, Moroccan migrants started to arrive in the Netherlands towards the end of the 1960s. The Dutch economy was booming and there was a lack of labor workers, while Morocco was suffering from unemployment. Morocco had acquired independence from France in 1956 and was struggling to keep the country united and progressing. The young Moroccan monarch Hassan II came to power only a few years after independence after the sudden death of his father, King Mohamed V. He used religion as an instrument to legitimate and reinforce his authority. By using the term *Amir al-mu'minin*, Commander of the Faithful, the king adds a religious aura to his status. He also made sure that he was present at public religious ceremonies, and that they were broadcasted. When Hassan II survived the coups d'état of 1971 and 1972, this was said to be thanks to his *baraka*, his godly blessing (Laurent 1993; Belal 2012).

As in the case of Turkish migrants, Moroccan Muslims have been active in establishing religious institutions in the Netherlands. At first, Moroccans gathered at work or in their homes to pray, but after a few years, they created their own mosque. The first Moroccan mosque in the Netherlands was opened in 1974, in the cellar of a church in the center of Amsterdam.

It was also at this time that the *Amicales* started to become operational. The Amicales were Moroccan organizations in different towns in Europe founded to help Moroccan migrants, but which actually functioned as control agencies for the *makhzen*, the Moroccan government, and the state security apparatus. The first meeting of the Amicales in the Netherlands took place in the mosque in Amsterdam. For migrants, this mosque represented more than a prayer room; it was a meeting place where people gathered to exchange the latest gossip, eat together, or organize language classes (Landman 1992; De Koning, 1994; Maussen 2006). But with the strong presence of the Amicales, it also became the place where representatives of the Moroccan government could keep themselves informed about the political affiliations of Moroccans in the Netherlands and about the contacts Moroccans established with one another. Some visitors openly criticized the presence of Moroccan government officials and Amicales members. Board members of the mosque who had fled the repressive Moroccan regime argued that the mosque should be a non-political, neutral place.

A year after the first meeting of the Amicales had taken place at the mosque in Amsterdam, Dutch and Moroccan leftist activists founded the *Komitee Marokkaanse Arbeiders in Nederland* (KMAN), the Committee of Moroccan Workers in the Netherlands. Soon, the Moroccan community in the Netherlands became divided into those belonging to the Amicales and those supporting the KMAN. The struggle between leftist activist and royalists that took place in Morocco was extended to the Netherlands.

It was only in the 1990s that a political transition towards democratization, freedom of expression, and press freedom took place in Morocco. As a result, the sharp political polarization gradually gave way to a highly fragmented organizational landscape (Bouras 2012). An important consequence was that the role of the Moroccan state became more ambiguous and diversified.

## Offer and demand

The involvement of the state in religious affairs was not just a matter of control. There was a need among the poorly educated migrant population for trained religious personnel. They turned to Morocco for help. In 1970, a delegation of Moroccan imams arrived in the Netherlands to offer religious accommodation during the fasting month of Ramadan, a period of heightened religious consciousness and practice. Later, Moroccans started to invite imams to come to the Netherlands through their own network, to avoid state interference. The content of the Friday sermons delivered by imams who are appointed by the Moroccan state, is controlled by the Moroccan government and many Dutch Moroccans resented this. The majority of Moroccans in the Netherlands originate from the northern Rif region, known for its antiroyalist sentiments. There has always been suspicion within the Moroccan community about the intentions of authorities, and most Moroccans did not want to have anything to do with state-sponsored organizations or activities. But at the same time, it was difficult for them to establish the necessary facilities to carry out the Islamic duties (Bouras 2012).

Moroccan mosques in the Netherlands operate independently from one another. Although there is some cooperation between associations of Moroccan Muslims, there is no central Islamic platform in the Netherlands representing them nationally: “The Union of Moroccan Muslim Organisations in the Netherlands has an unconsolidated structure, which is so loose that it cannot even tell itself how many mosques adhere to it” (Douwes 2009, p. 91). But even though the educational level of the migrants’ descendants was much higher than that of their parents, there still was a lack of religious knowledge badly needed to tackle the complex issues that Muslims living in a non-Muslim environment may have to deal with. Because the Moroccan community was not organized in this respect, it was not surprising that it turned to Morocco for religious orientation.

Burials are a clear example of how a specific demand triggered the involvement of the state. The first groups of Moroccan workers in the Netherlands thought they would eventually return to Morocco. Therefore, Moroccans who passed away in the Netherlands were buried in Morocco. But even when this migration took on a permanent character, Moroccans continued to bury their dead in Morocco, as there were few facilities for Islamic interment in the Netherlands. Only recently, several Dutch undertakers have started to propose more facilities for Islamic funerals (Kadrouch-Outmany 2013). For decades, it was mostly thanks to the Moroccan state that Moroccan migrants were able to bury their dead following the Islamic traditions: to be able to send money to family members in Morocco, virtually all Moroccan migrants had opened a bank account with a Moroccan bank in the Netherlands, which included insurance for burial in Morocco.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the Amicales helped the Moroccan communities abroad with these kinds of practical matters. It is not clear to which extent the members

of the Amicales all considered themselves political supporters of the Moroccan regime. Apparently, some members of the Amicales essentially saw themselves as active members of civil society, more than as political supporters of the Moroccan regime. Mohamed Stitou, a former president of the Amicales, stated in 1976, “Our main goal is to preserve the Islam for Dutch Moroccans. We are about to create a third mosque. We have founded an Arabic school, and we have plans to create a Muslim cemetery and to get permission from the abattoir for ritual slaughtering.” But he also said that Moroccans should refrain from political activities, as “they don’t know what they’re talking about” (cited in Bouras 2012, p. 137).

### State security threatened by Islamist terrorism

During the 1990s, Islamist terrorism started to become a serious threat. In 1994, two tourists were killed and several others were wounded in an armed attack in tourist hotspot Marrakech. As El-Katiri states, “Moroccan authorities were also alarmed by the involvement of individuals with a Moroccan background in different terror acts around the world, who were perceived as threatening the image of the country which had historically defined itself through its moderate and liberal interpretations of Islam and its Sufi Muslim orders, as well as being a popular European tourist destination” (El-Katiri 2013, p. 66). After the Casablanca attacks of 2003, in which 46 people were killed, Morocco rapidly introduced a new religious policy, for which it had already started to make plans in the preceding years.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs was allowed more funds. The Minister of Religious Affairs, Ahmed Toufiq, who was appointed in 2002, is a member of the *Boudchichiya*, a famous Sufi brotherhood. This is not a coincidence, as Sufism is being promoted as a soft Islam, which has the ability to unite people of different faiths. The current king, Mohamed VI, who took over power after the death of his father in 1999, wants to emphasize that the Moroccan Islam is tolerant and kind-hearted. He considers the radical, orthodox Islam as a phenomenon that has been imported into Morocco and has its origins outside the country (Darif 2010; Zemni 2006). To counter the proliferation of homemade *fatwas*, issued by self-appointed *fuqaha*, Islamic jurists, in remote corners of the Moroccan kingdom, a “High Council of Ulama,” religious scholars, was created. In 2010, the ministry also founded the European Council for Moroccan Ulama, based in Brussels (Darif; Zemni; Koksall 2009). All these changes reconfirmed the strong link between the monarchy and Islam.

Over the past few years, Morocco has heavily invested in better education of religious staff, which is seen as a key to prevent misjudgment and radicalism (El-Katiri 2013, p. 58). In 2008, the Moroccan government invited 40 imams from the Netherlands to Morocco, where they followed a 1-day course about recent developments in the religious field in Morocco and how to cope with Islamist extremism. This journey provoked a controversy in the Netherlands. Dutch politicians were afraid that the invitation of the imams would be another attempt of the Moroccan government to control Moroccan communities abroad (*Hirsch Ballin wil uitleg*, 2008). However, efforts such as these do not necessarily obstruct Dutch policies. Dutch politicians seem to have become aware of this now that they share a growing concern with Morocco. Since the expansion of the Islamic State and the relatively large number of Moroccans

and Moroccan Dutchmen and women to Syria, Morocco and the Netherlands have a common goal: fight religious extremism. They have been intensifying their cooperation in this field.<sup>18</sup>

While the Moroccan state sees religion as an important element in the bond between Dutch Moroccans and Morocco, it does not promote religion in a specific way and there is no particular religious policy aimed at MRE (*Marocains Résidents à l'Étranger*, or Moroccans living abroad). Although the function of *Amir al-mu'minin* legitimates his position as monarch, Mohamed VI adopts a different policy than his father and strengthens his authority essentially by extending his economic power. Therefore, the ministry for MRE is mainly focused on economic issues and tries to stimulate European Moroccans to invest in the Moroccan economy. Even religious policies must be understood in this light. A harmonic integration of migrants into their host countries, and the avoidance of a scenario of clashing perceptions, is of pivotal economic importance to the Moroccan government (El-Katiri 2013).

### First Muslim, then Moroccan

Moroccans see themselves as Muslim in the first place (Ayadi et al. 2007). Their Islamic identity is more important than their Moroccan identity. This focus on the Islamic part of their identity is stronger in the Netherlands and is something Muslim minorities in Europe have in common (see for example Buitelaar 2009; DeHanas 2015). Therefore, one might expect that the affiliation with Morocco does not play a role in the religious practices of Dutch-Moroccan Muslims in the Netherlands. But, even if Moroccan Dutchmen refuse direct intervention of the Moroccan regime in their religious activities, they look to Morocco for religious guidance, as the Islamic *madhab* or school to which they adhere is the Malekite one, which is mainly practiced in Northern Africa. While some Muslim migrants in Europe adopt Saudi Arabia as their main religious reference, the Wahhabite Islam which is practiced by the Saudis is considered as too rigid and too extremist by most Moroccans, even if they do respect Saudi Arabia, the beholder of the holy city of Mecca, as a center of religious importance (Himeur 2008; Chaarani 2004).

On important feast days such as *Aid Sghir*, at the end of the month of Ramadan, or *Aid Kbir*, the Feast of the Sacrifice, Moroccans, both in Morocco and in Europe, switch on the television and tune into the Moroccan national television channel. They not only listen to Quranic verses being recited, but also see the Moroccan king deliver a speech, perform his prayers, or slaughter a sheep. In this way, monarchy and religion continue to be linked.

But on the Internet, it is the Wahhabite Islam that is most present. Through new media, which is where most youngsters turn to when they are looking for answers to religious questions, Wahhabism is a strong competitor to Malikism. Concerned by this development, Morocco has made important investments in the religious field. As part of religious reforms in Morocco, a channel entirely dedicated to religious issues was created. Its name, “Assadissa,” the sixth, does not only refer to its place in the Moroccan broadcasting network, but of course also—essentially—to the Moroccan

<sup>18</sup> Schmachtel 2010; *Marokko wil Nederland helpen*, 2015; *Nederland en Marokko werken samen tegen radicalisering*, 2015).



monarch. According to El-Katiri, “the Assadissa TV, with its images, and sometimes with very simple language has made great effect on explaining the Moroccan Islam to millions of Moroccan citizens” (El-Katiri 2013, p. 62). To promote a tolerant Islam and to counter religious extremism, king Mohamed VI has recently opened the institute for the education of imams and *murchidates* (female religious guides). This institution is mainly destined for African imams, to support Morocco’s economic expansion in Africa, but apart from several hundred Malian, Guinean and Ivorian imams, several dozen French and Belgian imams will also be trained here. The Dutch minister of Social Affairs has said that the training of Dutch imams in Morocco may be envisaged (*Nederland en Marokko werken samen tegen radicalisering*, 2015).

## Legal ties

An important aspect of the entanglement of state and private transnational connections concerns the Moroccan family law, the so-called *Mudawana*. This law is directly drawn from the Quran and the Sunna. Towards the end of the 1990s, the Moroccan king took the initiative to change the *Mudawana*. This led to much controversy, as many Moroccans believed that this law, inspired by the Quran, could not be changed. The king then instated a special committee of religious experts to draw up a new family law with religious legitimacy. The new *Mudawana*, introduced in 2003, has had important consequences for Moroccans abroad. An example of a new measure with far-reaching consequences is that the children of Moroccan women (married to a non-Moroccan man) are automatically Moroccan as well. The renewal of the *Mudawana* has not only strengthened the religious underpinnings of the ties between Moroccans and the monarchy, but also the legal ties. Children of Moroccan parents automatically acquire the Moroccan nationality, and as it is not possible to renounce this nationality<sup>19</sup>, Dutchwomen and men of Moroccan descent all keep the Moroccan nationality. In this way, religion, politics, and nationalism stay intertwined, and changes in the religious field in Morocco may have a direct effect on Moroccans, also if they are born and raised in the Netherlands.

When analyzing the Moroccan state’s efforts to use religious affiliations as a way to tie Moroccans to the monarchy and the Dutch aim to prevent that, we cannot ignore the agency of Moroccan-Dutch Muslims. During the last two decades, Dutch Muslim youngsters started to look for ways to modernize Islam and to reconcile it with the Dutch context. They would like to see imams preach in Dutch, in order to be comprehensible for any Dutch Muslim. Many initiatives that are now being taken to develop an Islam that is more rooted in the Netherlands are taken by Dutchmen of Moroccan descent. They play an important role in the emergence of a Muslim civil society and they actively take part in debates about the position of Islam in Dutch society. The European Council for Moroccan Ulama, founded in 2009, might have played a role in the renewal of the Dutch Moroccan-Muslim landscape, but it does not seem to make much effort to connect to the ongoing changes. The Moroccan ministry of Religious Affairs does not seem to follow up on these developments, or at least not

<sup>19</sup> While it is in theory possible to renounce to the Moroccan nationality for those who do not have a Moroccan father (see Perrin 2007), there are no known cases of Moroccans who have actually succeeded in completing the legal procedure and receive a favorable response to their demand.

quickly enough, and is losing foothold. Until now, the Ulama Council has organized a few activities, such as lectures and conferences about religious topics, but it has not been very visible yet; the main media attention it got was at the beginning of 2013, when its members were accused of corrupt practices (Tchounand 2012).

Moroccan-Dutch Muslims will more often refer to a global Islam for guidance and thus further the development of a Dutch Islam. In 2013, Yassine Elforkani, a Dutch preacher of Moroccan origin, was criticized for accepting financial support and advice from the ministry of Islamic Affairs in Kuwait (Soetenhorst 2013). Dutch authorities immediately expressed their concern about the influence of Kuwait on a Dutch mosque, but this is actually a strong example of how Dutch Muslims do not exclusively turn towards the state of their (parents') country of origin anymore, but adhere to a globalized Islam. By doing so, they are weakening state transnational practices, replacing it by more private transnational practices.

## Concluding remarks

From the moment the first migrants arrived in Europe, the governments of Turkey and Morocco have been involved in the lives of their subjects in Europe. Apart from individual material and financial ties that link migrants to their families back home, there is a multiplicity of political and ideological, but also emotional links that bind migrants to their home countries in which states play a crucial role. In this article, we have addressed a very complex field, in this respect, Islam. We have demonstrated that it would be a gross simplification to assume that state activities and practices could be singled out and set apart from initiatives taken by ordinary Muslims. Islam in Europe and the ways in which it developed is historically, socially, politically, and culturally connected to developments in the countries of origins and increasingly also with the rest of the Islamic world. The cases we have addressed in this article demonstrate this very clearly, but at the same time, the relationships and transnational networks that Muslim communities in Europe develop and maintain have their own dynamics.

As we have seen, it is impossible to disentangle grassroot practices from those pertaining to the state. This is not because we cannot separate two modes of activity from each other analytically, but because these belong to the same transnational field and refers to overlapping practices and imaginaries. Although the two states that are discussed here have a political agenda depending on the evolving political climate over the course of years, the two cases also demonstrate how state and private practices, networks and initiatives are often and mutually depended. We cannot understand the initiatives developed by the state if we ignore their intricate relation and connectedness with grassroot initiatives and vice versa. On the other hand, it would also be simplifying to conflate both spheres. Activities related to Islam perfectly demonstrate how state and private activities intermingle and overlap.

When we look at the developments of religion as a complex transnational field of activity over a longer period, there are some striking similarities between the Turkish and Moroccan case. In both cases, religious affiliation is a very complex source of binding but also of fission. State monitored transnational networks have been tools of

binding, but the same networks have engendered processes of disengagement from the state. This is certainly the case with Turkey and the extended organizational structure in Europe, but also the fragmented Moroccan religious landscape in the Netherlands makes the relations complex. They have developed into transnational social fields with their own dynamics, of which state initiatives constitute an integral part.

There are a number of factors that account for that. One is, of course, the changing characteristics of the Muslim population in Europe. From a poorly educated migrant population with a weak social position and strong familial ties with the country of origin, they have developed into a group of people for whom the ties with the country of their parents or grandparents is not unidirectional and unambiguous anymore. The other reason for the changing position of the Turkish and Moroccan states concerns the evolving characteristics of transnational networks. Contemporary transnational activities are increasingly based on a cultural sense of belonging. At the outset, we have argued that there is no contradiction between the continuation of transnational networks and rooting of migrants in societies of settlement. We have refuted the idea that Turkish and Moroccan governments frustrate “normal” integration processes of their subjects by monitoring their subjects abroad. Even if this would be the aim, it is limited and conditioned by developments in the migrant communities. The Turkish and Moroccan Islamic landscapes in Europe can only be properly understood as a part of the existing transnational fields of which the respective states are an intricate part and not an external force.

We have also argued that the externalization and deregulation of state interventions has changed the modes of involvement. The nation-state is a cultural project. In the case of Turkey, the complex historical relation between Turkishness and Islam has deeply impacted on how the Turkish Islamic landscape in Europe has developed. In the case of Moroccan Islam, political struggles and state security issues have deeply impacted on the Moroccan Islamic landscape in Europe.

There are also important differences between the two cases we have analyzed. The most fundamental is, of course, the historically grown difference between the state and religion in both countries. This has impacted on the ways in which nationhood and religious affiliation are intertwined. A related aspect concerns the differences in the Netherlands between the two communities. The Moroccan Islamic landscape is much more fragmented than the Turkish. This is highly relevant for the ways in which the respective states connect to these landscapes in the Netherlands.

In this article, we have demonstrated that statecraft in transnational fields, rather than just being a dominant force, is itself situational and contingent upon the lives of its subjects. Our cases reveal two (seemingly contradictory) developments: on the one hand, we see that the Islamic landscape in Netherlands (as in other European countries) increasingly operates according to local dynamics and becomes less dependent on agents in the countries of origin to determine their agendas. On the other hand, a relatively wealthy, well-educated and mobile middle class has emerged among Muslims in Europe. Due to the rapid spread of modern mass media, transnational networks have proliferated, producing a multiplicity of forms and modes with which Muslims sustain relations across borders. Consequently, states have to redefine their role in the Dutch institutional landscape on a constant basis.

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